

Wisconsin Scholarships & Grants

The two scholarships with no application, the grant that pays four different maximums, and the February date nobody publishes.

Wisconsin has one front door: the FAFSA. There is no separate state portal and no statewide aid deadline, which is precisely why families here lose money. The state's two scholarships are designated by the high school with no student application, and the Wisconsin Grant is allocated campus by campus and awarded until each allocation runs out. **Counselors: this sheet covers the Class of 2027, who file 2027-2028 forms during the 2026-2027 school year.** 2025 Wisconsin Act 80, enacted December 9, 2025, changed the Academic Excellence Scholarship: every high school with 1 to 499 students now receives one scholarship instead of competing for a statewide pool, and homeschooled seniors may now be nominated with an ACT of 33 or an SAT of 1500.

The Programs at a Glance

Program	What it pays and who qualifies
Wisconsin Grant	Need-based, FAFSA only. Four sector maximums (2025-2026): \$4,850 private nonprofit, \$3,500 UW, \$2,197 tribal, \$1,752 technical college. Available at less than half-time, prorated 100/75/50/25 by credit load. Ten semesters maximum.
Academic Excellence Scholarship (AES)	Up to \$2,250/year toward tuition, eight semesters. State funds half, the college matches half. Goes to the senior(s) with the highest cumulative GPA. No student application. One award per school under 500 students, scaling to six at 2,500 and above.
Technical Excellence Scholarship (TES)	Up to \$2,250/year for six semesters, usable only at the 16 Wisconsin technical colleges. Goes to the senior with the highest technical proficiency: youth apprenticeship, state or industry certification, or a DPI-certified technical diploma program. No student application.
Talent Incentive Program (TIP)	\$600 to \$1,800 initial award; continuing awards \$250 to \$1,500. For the most financially needy and educationally disadvantaged residents. Requires a nomination from the college financial aid office or a WEOP counselor. Initial awards go to first-time freshmen only.
Tuition promise programs	Bucky's Tuition Promise at UW-Madison covers tuition and segregated fees at family AGI of \$65,000 or less and now requires the CSS Profile plus the FAFSA by December 1. The system-wide Wisconsin Tuition Promise has funded only the 2023 and 2025 entering cohorts; nothing is announced for fall 2027. UW-Milwaukee runs its own program.
Smaller programs	Indian Student Assistance Grant (\$250 to \$1,100). Hearing/Visually Impaired Grant (\$250 to \$1,800, the one award usable out of state). Fund for Wisconsin Scholars: a private foundation that selects recipients at random from Pell-eligible graduates of Wisconsin public high schools. No application; the FAFSA is what enters a student.

Deadlines to Post on Your Wall

Date	What happens	Who acts
Oct 1, 2026	2027-2028 FAFSA on track to open. Uses 2025 tax data.	Family
Oct 2026	Second round of Direct Admit Wisconsin decisions	Universities of Wisconsin
Dec 1, 2026	UW-Madison priority date. FAFSA and CSS Profile due for Bucky's Tuition Promise.	Family
Jan 2027	First semester closes. This is the transcript AES and TES are decided from.	High school
Feb 1, 2027	Earliest common campus FAFSA cutoff for Wisconsin Grant. MN reciprocity opens for fall 2027.	Family
Feb 25, 2027	Statutory deadline to designate AES and TES scholars. No new grades or scores count after this date.	High school
May 1, 2027	Direct Admit Wisconsin opt-in deadline for the Class of 2028	Junior + high school
Sep 30, 2027	AES scholars must be enrolled full-time at a participating Wisconsin institution or lose the award	Student

The Rules That Trip Families Up

- **There is no state deadline, and that is the trap.** HEAB allocates Wisconsin Grant money per campus and each campus sets its own FAFSA priority date, some as early as February 1. Have families call every school on the list and ask for that date by name.
- **AES and TES have no application form.** Families waiting for one wait through February 25 and then it is over. The action is a conversation with you, before winter break.
- **Laude score is not GPA.** HEAB, after consulting the Department of Justice, states the statute does not allow the award to go to the highest laude score and that some districts must change practice. The administrative code defines GPA as the cumulative GPA as normally determined by each high school.
- **TIP requires someone to nominate the student.** No nomination, no grant, and no notice explaining why.
- **The Wisconsin Grant pays the least at the cheapest school.** \$1,752 at a technical college against \$3,500 at a UW campus and \$4,850 at a private nonprofit. Do not let a family cross off a private college before seeing an award letter.

Academic Excellence Scholarship: Check These Things Early

- **How many awards does your school get?** Based on the grades 9-12 enrollment reported to DPI on the third Friday in September.
- **Which GPA does your district use for this?** If your district ranks by laude points, the designation must still be made on cumulative GPA.
- **Which transcript counts?** The official transcript as of the last day of the last semester ending before February 25. Senior spring never counts.
- **Who are your alternates?** Ties are broken by the faculty; alternates come from the same GPA or the next highest, but not below 3.800. Alternates move up when a scholar declines.
- **Is the student's email a school address?** The state nomination system will not accept one.

What the Wisconsin Grant Actually Pays

HEAB runs a separate formula for each sector. SAI is the Student Aid Index from the FAFSA; a lower SAI means more need. Figures are as funded for 2025-2026, the most recent HEAB has published.

Sector	Formula (2025-2026)	Maximum	Note
Private nonprofit (WG-PNP)	Maximum paid up to an SAI of \$10,000	\$4,850	The largest state grant in Wisconsin
UW campus (WG-UW)	(\$8,750 minus SAI) x 40%	\$3,500	Phases out as SAI approaches \$8,750
Tribal college (WG-Tribal)	(\$6,560 minus SAI) x 33.49%	\$2,197	Unchanged for 2025-2026
Technical college (WG-TC)	(\$9,270 minus SAI) x 18.9%	\$1,752	The cheapest school carries the smallest grant

Scholarships by High School Enrollment (Grades 9-12)

Enrollment	AES awards	TES awards	Enrollment	AES awards	TES awards
1 to 79	1	Pool of 10 statewide	1,500 to 1,999	4	4
80 to 499	1	1	2,000 to 2,499	5	5
500 to 999	2	2	2,500 and above	6	6
1,000 to 1,499	3	3	Award value	\$2,250/yr	\$2,250/yr

The 1 to 79 AES change is new with 2025 Wisconsin Act 80. Those schools previously competed for a statewide pool of 10.

Counselor Calendar: What to Tell Students When

When	Class of 2027 (seniors)	Class of 2028 (juniors)
Sept to Oct 2026	Set up FSA IDs for student and parent, on separate personal emails. File the 2027-2028 FAFSA at opening. Ask each campus for its Wisconsin Grant FAFSA date.	Understand that first semester of senior year is the GPA that will decide AES. Say it now, not in April.
Nov to Dec 2026	CSS Profile plus FAFSA by Dec 1 for anyone considering UW-Madison at AGI of \$65,000 or less. Ask me how our school designates AES and TES scholars.	Confirm the school participates in Direct Admit Wisconsin and how to opt in during spring.
Jan to Feb 2027	First semester transcript closes. AES and TES designations made by Feb 25. Watch campus FAFSA cutoffs, some land Feb 1. MN reciprocity opens for fall 2027.	Top ten percent at the end of eleventh grade means guaranteed admission to every UW except Madison under the Wisconsin Guarantee.
Mar to Sep 2027	Compare award letters on the balance remaining, not the number of scholarships listed. Ask financial aid offices whether the student was considered for TIP. AES scholars must be enrolled full-time at a participating Wisconsin institution by Sept 30, 2027.	Direct Admit opt-in closes May 1, 2027, and offers arrive by high school email in August 2027. Youth apprenticeship and certification work is what makes a TES nomination possible.

Three Mistakes That Cost Wisconsin Students Money

- **Filing the FAFSA in March.** Federal aid still arrives; the Wisconsin Grant may not. As of August 10, 2026, HEAB reported 2026-2027 Wisconsin Grant funds committed at 144.81% in the UW sector and 191.74% in the technical college sector.
- **Filing only the FAFSA for UW-Madison.** Bucky's Tuition Promise has required the CSS Profile since the 2026-2027 cycle, for the incoming year only, by the December 1 priority date.
- **Assuming the Wisconsin Tuition Promise still exists.** Only the 2023 and 2025 entering cohorts were funded. Have families ask the campus directly before budgeting on it.

The Wisconsin Signature Trap: The Inbox You Cannot See

Direct Admit Wisconsin sends admission offers to the student's **high school email account**. For the Class of 2027 those went out August 1, 2026, with a second round in October 2026. Meanwhile the state's AES and TES nomination system **refuses** high school email addresses and requires a personal one. The state's admission pipeline runs through an account parents never check, the state's scholarship pipeline will not accept it, and the account is deactivated after graduation. One permanent personal email address, used on every form, with school mail forwarded to it, closes all three gaps.

Free Resources: No Account, No Cost, No Data Collection

Resource	Where
Full Wisconsin state aid guide, updated as rules change	collegereadyparent.org/wisconsin/
Wisconsin Higher Educational Aids Board, all programs and contacts	heab.state.wi.us · (608) 267-2206
AES and TES pages, enrollment tables, nomination instructions	heab.state.wi.us/features/aes.html and /tes.html
Direct Admit Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Guarantee, and MN reciprocity	wisconsin.edu
FAFSA and FSA ID	studentaid.gov
Fund for Wisconsin Scholars (no application) and grade-level checklists	ffws.org · collegereadyparent.org/checklists/

No paywall, no accounts, no lead forms, no student data collection. Counselors and educators: you may freely copy, print, and distribute this sheet. Found something out of date? Email leo@collegereadyparent.org and it gets fixed.

Verified August 29, 2026 against the Wisconsin Higher Educational Aids Board, Wisconsin Statutes ch. 39 and Administrative Code ch. HEA 9, 2025 Wisconsin Act 80, the Universities of Wisconsin, and UW-Madison Student Financial Aid. Dollar amounts are the maximums funded for 2025-2026, the most recent HEAB has published; HEAB sets them annually and the 2027-2028 figures will differ. Confirm anything you are about to make a financial decision on with the official source.